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SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDED CAPTION)

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: RRT ERBIL: PROFILE OF PUK NAWSHIRWAN MUSTAFA

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[C](#). BAGHDAD 623

Classified By: Regional Coordinator Lucy Tamlyn for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

This is an Erbil Regional Reconstruction Team (RRT) cable.

[1](#). (C) Summary. This cable profiles Nawshirwan Mustafa, the former Deputy Secretary General of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and leader of the "unofficial" PUK reformist movement in Sulaimaniyah. Long an advocate of change within the PUK, he continues to be a gadfly to the PUK establishment and perhaps harbors long-term aspirations to succeed Talibani as PUK General Secretary. End summary.

[2](#). (C) Former PUK Deputy Secretary General Nawshirwan Mustafa is widely considered to be the leader of the self-proclaimed "reformist" movement in the PUK. His recent decision to run an independent slate in the upcoming parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan Region has shaken the carefully balanced PUK-KDP coalition and thrust him into renewed prominence (ref A). The following profile is drawn from a series of conversations with RRTOff and identifies his political and economic views. (Note: Nawshirwan is known by his first name. The first syllable is pronounced like the English word, "no." End Note.)

Mini-biography of Nawshirwan

[3](#). (SBU) Nawshirwan was born in Sulaimaniyah in 1944 and graduated from Baghdad University with a degree in political science in 1967. In 1969, he established a weekly magazine, Rizgari (Freedom), to expound his ideas; and in 1970, he founded a clandestine political organization, Komala. (Note: The Komala was originally a Marxist-oriented group, but over time it became a more generally leftist group, finally ending up as a nationalist group. End Note.) After the Iraqi government shut down his magazine and put Komala on a list of proscribed organizations, Nawshirwan fled to Austria to live in exile.

[4](#). (SBU) Nawshirwan studied international law at the University of Vienna. He was in his final year preparing for his doctorate when the Kurdish rebellion led by Mullah Mustafa Barzani collapsed in 1975. At Jalal Talabani's request, Nawshirwan abandoned his doctoral studies to join him in Damascus to create the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, and was one of the seven people who signed the statement that declared the party's creation. Nawshirwan brought his own Komala faction under the PUK umbrella and became the PUK Deputy General Secretary.

[5](#). (SBU) After the PUK lost to the KDP in the elections for the Kurdistan National Assembly in 1992, Nawshirwan claims he

argued that the PUK should assume the role of an opposition party rather than join the KDP in the coalition which was ultimately formed. He also said he called for electing the PUK Politburo and General Secretary by a vote of all the party members rather than by just senior leaders, placing clear limits on the authority of party officials, and instituting transparency in the way the party was managed. After Talabani rejected Nawshirwan's advice and agreed with Masoud Barzani to divide the government 50/50 between the PUK and the KDP, Nawshirwan left Iraq for London. There he wrote the first of his Kurdish history books. He returned to Kurdistan only to leave again before the PUK-KDP civil war broke out in 1994. He did not return until after a PUK-KDP accord was brokered with USG help.

¶16. (C) After the liberation of Iraq in 2003, Nawshirwan Q6. (C) After the liberation of Iraq in 2003, Nawshirwan pressed for reform, leading a movement within the party to make the PUK a more democratic institution. In 2004, he circulated a petition among senior PUK members asking for Talabani to make the decision-making process in the party more democratic. Talabani rejected these demands, but promised changes after the elections that were to be held toward the end of 2005. However, the promised changes were never fulfilled, and in December 2006 Nawshirwan resigned as PUK General Secretary but kept his party membership.

¶17. (C) Reportedly as a reward for his services to the party, Talabani provided Nawshirwan with a generous retirement package that he used to establish a media company, which now consists of a newspaper, a website, and an all-news television station. Several sources claim that Talabani continues to fund Nawshirwan's media company and is not happy that Nawshirwan has used his media operation to air his ideas and give extensive coverage to critical of the PUK.

¶18. (U) Married since 1981, Nawshirwan has three children: a

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son born in 1982, and twins (a son and a daughter) born in ¶1984. The oldest son graduated with a degree in international economics from Imperial College (UK). The younger son is currently studying economics at Harvard, and his daughter is pursuing a degree in medicine at Imperial College. Nawshirwan speaks Kurdish, Arabic, English, German, and Farsi.

Nawshirwan's Views on Corruption

¶19. (SBU) When asked what concerns him most, Nawshirwan singles out government corruption. He cites a lack of transparency, and the fact that only a handful of people know how the billions that Baghdad sends to the Kurdistan each year are spent. Nawshirwan alleges that no senior official is ever punished for corruption because the judicial system itself has been corrupted. According to him, the public is deeply unhappy with this state of affairs; they are fully aware that corruption is responsible for the decrepit infrastructure and woefully inadequate public services in the region.

¶10. (SBU) To fight corruption, Nawshirwan advocates a system of accountability that will render government finances transparent. He wants to establish a truly independent judiciary that is willing to tackle corruption at all levels. He says that he seeks a political system in which the party is separate from the government and no longer interferes in its day-to-day affairs. He is particularly incensed by the interference of political parties on daily life and commerce.

Economic Reform

¶11. (SBU) Economics also figures prominently in Nawshirwan's reform agenda. He believes that a flourishing democracy depends on a strong private sector, which in turn depends on

economic opportunity. To achieve that, he believes that the Kurdistan Region must break with the statist economic model that has prevailed in Iraq for decades, with its bloated, unproductive public sector subsisting entirely from oil revenues. Nawshirwan readily admits that his belief in the free market economy is a complete reversal from the Marxist beliefs that he held in his youth, a change he attributes to experience and observation of the real world.

¶12. (SBU) Nawshirwan advocates basing the economy on agriculture and related industries, taking advantage of the Kurdistan Region's rich soil and water. His plan rests on a four-step process, which would initially be financed by oil revenues:

- Build dams in order to control the region's water supplies.
- Bring in foreign experts to teach advanced agricultural techniques, including irrigation.
- Carry out land reform of state-owned land, ensuring that farmers have economically viable plots and that land is used for its best possible agricultural use.
- Build new market towns to help revitalize rural areas that were devastated by Saddam's Anfal campaign, which destroyed thousands of villages, by linking isolated villages and providing them with access to medical clinics, schools, and other services that currently do not exist.

In addition, Nawshirwan envisions rebuilding the Mosul-Basra railroad, with feeder lines to the Kurdistan Region; this would enable the region to economically transport agricultural products, particularly sheep, to profitable markets in the Persian Gulf.

Kurdistan Region Must Be Integrated with a Democratic Iraq

¶13. (SBU) Nawshirwan does not believe in creating an independent Kurdistan: "The day of the mini-state is over." He resolutely supports full Kurdish integration with a strong, democratic Iraq, whose constitution he views as a bulwark that will protect the Kurds and guarantee their rights. He argues that vesting the central government with total responsibility for distributing all Iraqi oil revenues is a prerequisite to ensuring transparency of the funds that reach the Kurdistan Region. He supports the Minister of Oil Shahrastani's views that there is a lack of transparency as to who profits from existing oil production sharing agreements in the KRG.

¶14. (C) Nawshirwan feels strongly that the Kurds must not say or do things that will inflame Iraqi public opinion against them. He is upset that some Kurdish leaders have used intemperate rhetoric and advocated policies that have unnecessarily created tension between Arabs and Kurds. He cites statements calling for the US to establish military bases in the Kurdistan Region as an example. He says the

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Kurds must better manage the relationship between the Peshmerga and the national army and police, another source of tension.

¶15. (C) With regard to Kirkuk, Nawshirwan thinks that the Kurdish leadership has badly misplayed its hand. The KRG cannot force the Arabs or Turkomen to join them. Instead, he argues that it must make things attractive for them with real, as opposed to merely symbolic, power sharing. The KRG must also appeal to Arab and Turkomen on economic grounds by reducing corruption, building infrastructure, and creating employment opportunities, he adds.

Comment

¶16. (C) What does Nawshirwan want? Were he motivated purely

by power and money, he would have had no incentive to walk away from the number two position in the party, which he did in December 2006. His motives for running an independent list in the upcoming KRG elections against the joint KDP-PUK list are unclear. Logically, if he is unhappy with PUK and believes in his reform policies, he should start his own party. However, Nawshirwan refuses to do so. Perhaps Nawshirwan still holds fast to his long-term goal of becoming PUK General Secretary after Talabani (ref B) or perhaps he recognizes he has no political or financial backing to succeed on his own. PUK and KDP leaders have pointed out his limited regional appeal. Even his own reform-minded followers have pointed out that he does not meet with the general public and his popularity is limited to Sulemaniyah. When his reform group resigned from the PUK on principle, Nawshirwan abandoned his flock to continue cutting his own deal (ref C). Most KDP leaders outright despise him, perhaps because they fear his reformist tendencies, but more likely because of his voluntary absence in the 1994-1998 civil war. Both KDP and PUK insiders accuse Nawshirwan from running away to Europe whenever the going gets tough. Nawshirwan himself admitted that he could never set foot in Erbil because KDP Assayesh would kill him. It would be extremely difficult for him to assume a PUK leadership role, if that is true. For now, Talabani will decide how to handle Nawshirwan in order to keep the PUK-KDP accord intact for upcoming KRG elections and for the Kurds to effectively spar with Maliki and the GoI.

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